

Jean KLEIN'

Yoga means connection,  
but connection between what and what?'

Johan van der Kooij about his teacher Jean Klein (†1998)

When I wanted to begin doing yoga, I met Wolter Keers. He absolutely didn't fit the image of a yoga teacher in my eyes. He smoked and drank whatever he felt like. Nevertheless I was taken by his erudition and insight. Through him I came to know that there were more forms of yoga than the widely-known hatha-yoga (body yoga). I spoke with Wolter about spirituality, life questions and Self-realization once a week for two years. Wolter became a friend and teacher. My trip home began. To deepen this search Wolter introduced me to Jean Klein, an advaita-vedanta Guru who also gave instruction in Kashmir-yoga. I attended Jean Klein's seminars for twenty years in Holland, France and England.

'When you want to know when it is time for your Self-realization, ask the timeless in you. The timeless can only answer in its own language, so it will answer in the timeless. This answer can only be perceived in the timeless.'

- Jean Klein -

Jean Klein was not only an advaita-vedanta teacher, but also a yogi who gave instruction in Kashmir-yoga. In Kashmir-yoga the classical yoga positions are carried out from the energy body. The energy body is the prana or etheric body that feeds and saturates the physical and mental bodies. The feeding, the prana, is in principle unconditioned, just like consciousness. The moment that the prana takes form within the physical or mental body it takes on the conditioning.

\*Vedanta simply means: conclusions from the Vedas. The Vedas are holy texts from ancient India. There are three schools in Vedanta: dvaita = dualistic, advaita = non-dualistic, and vishishtadvaitavedanta = a system between the two. The advaita Vedanta as we now know it has been always kept alive by the centuries long oral tradition carried over from master to disciple.

\*Pranayama literally means: control of (life)energy.

\*Hatha-yoga literally means: union of sun and moon. Hatha-yoga is principally body yoga.

In the classical yoga schools Hatha-yoga is seen as preparation for pranayama, and pranayama is in its turn a preparation for meditation.

Probably for us westerners the direct path, the advaita-vedanta or jnana yoga appeals to us more, than the traditional 'step for step' route of body yoga.

\*Kashmir-yoga is a form of Hatha-Yoga in which the traditional postures are done from the etheric body, that radiates through and feeds the body.

Jean Klein brought Kashmir-yoga from India to Europe. During his seminars Jean Klein gave instruction in Kashmir-yoga, pranayama, meditation and advaita-vedanta. Jean Klein was always very clear about the role of hatha-yoga seen from the advaita-vedanta point of view: 'Yoga can never bring you to enlightenment, but gives you a better point of departure. He meant by that this energetic form of yoga could develop a certain openness for 'the Truth' in the body. This openness can be felt in the physical body. But he also put body work in perspective. In answer to a question about why we actually did hatha-yoga during the seminar he answered jokingly: 'Just to pass the time.' He preferred to give the name body-awareness to hatha-yoga, he didn't love the word yoga very much: 'Yoga means connection, but connection between what and what?' Jean Klein taught a direct, oriented towards experience, form of kashmir-yoga. He really let us feel it. He taught us to explore the feeling of touch without the use of memory and then to experience the unconditioned energy body. In this way it is possible to experience the limitlessness of the body. Because this is easier to feel than to understand intellectually, I give here a short exercise:

Lie down comfortably, close your eyes, breathe in and out calmly. Bring your attention to your left arm, relax the entire arm and let the weight of your arm rest totally on the ground. Feel how your hand touches the ground... Now, visualize the hand, the fingers, the palm, the back of the hand, until you have a clear visualization of the left hand.. Next do that with your lower arm and upper arm. Now visualize the entire left arm. Then let go of the visualization... Direct your attention once more to your left arm, but now without visualization, without remembering the arm.. What do you

discover?... That you have completely no arm.. maybe there is a vague tingling, maybe you feel hardness or softness, but the arm as a concept exists only as a memory. What remains is feeling of space.

Whenever I went to one of Jean Klein's seminars I took along a suitcase full of questions; after a few days all the questions disappeared, pretty much all the questions; after a few days only one question remained: Who am I? It was impressive to be in Jan Klein's vicinity, a great clarity and rest came out of him. The approach (or method if you wish) of Jean Klein can perhaps be summarized in one word: observe. We are accustomed to place the stress, the center of gravity on that which is observed, on objects. We are interested in objects because we think we can find happiness in them and also project unhappiness on them. Jean Klein in his teachings directed our orientation of being to make an about turn, towards the inside.

During the seminars he stimulated us continuously to witness consciously, during the yoga postures but also during the inner movements of thinking and feeling. I can still feel the patience and warmth with which he did that. Everything I have is thanks to his unconditional love.

Hereunder there follows a number of my favorite quotations from 'Open to the Unknown', talks in Delphi that Jean held in Greece in 1990.

Jean Klein: I assume there is sincerity in this meeting, the sincerity to really look and to discover what life is. The fact that you are sincere means that you have already searched in many directions. The longing to search for life in many directions, to discover your true being, comes from an inner urge to find the truth, the inner urge to discover yourself. If you really seriously search in all directions you become exhausted and speaking psychologically, bankrupt. You feel completely helpless: you are in despair; you no longer know where to turn; all streets are dead ends; your thinking can no longer help. This crisis is the most important moment in your life. You come into a state of complete not-knowing. You have no hope or expectations anymore. It is a rare occasion in which the thinking is confronted with its limitations, and because it is useless as such, the thinking gives up, then you are open, open for nothing, only open for openness. This openness is the threshold of your true

nature. Remain there in not knowing and you will see what happens.

We are accustomed to using thinking and feeling in order to understand, so we have to go to the end of thinking, to the moment of total exhaustion. Said differently, the human mind needs to know its limitations. By means of this a completely relaxed state arises. Thinking operates in time and space, but what we actually are stands outside of time. Thus time, thought, can never understand what lies beyond time. When thought is exhausted we are on the threshold of our true nature. This threshold is a global perception, free of mental concepts. Intellectual understanding dissolves in silence, and this silence is our true nature. Maybe we have a clear mathematical idea in our thinking, but this understanding is still objective; the mathematical idea has to completely dissolve in being the understanding, which is a global perceiving. When we speak about being understanding it is this global perceiving.

(In other words, you can think of something, a metaphor or an example out of daily life, but that all belongs to thought, being understanding means being established in the area where thought appears. the translator)

You know moments in your daily life when you are completely absent as a person. You cannot think this absence, you are it. If you consider yourself to be a person, then you make an object of yourself, and as such you are connected as an object with objects. Then you occupy a part of yourself, and a part can only be a part. By seeing only one part nothing else can arise except reactions, and reactions can only create conflict. But if you are free of yourself, free of the idea of being a person, in this absence of yourself, you are actually presence, all-encompassing presence. Then you see the surroundings without reference, out of your totality, out of your all-encompassing oneness. There is no reaction anymore, there is only action. There is no entity in the cosmos. There is only functioning. There is not anyone who functions.

How is it possible to free yourself of the past by only observing?

Jean Klein: See how observing in the right way changes the patterns in your body–thought– feeling. See what effect it has in you to be the observing.

When you think of the past, that is the present, a thought in the now. Thus, in reality there is no psychological past. There is a chronological past, but this is only a very small percentage of what we call 'the past'. Ninety percent of the so-called past is therefore fictive. The psychological past is there only to preserve the 'I-concept', and the 'I-concept' is built up exclusively from memory. Most of our so called memory is psychological. If you really see that the 'I' as such has no existence, that it is a thought, then the psychological past is given up. Enormous quantities of energy and tension are invested in thinking about and maintaining a psychological past. If we see that it is only daydreams we give it up, and then suddenly there is a deep letting go, a deep relaxation, that brings us to a state of openness. Free of the 'I-idea' and psychological memory we are open for intelligence, open for pure functional memory, a cosmic memory, a universal memory. We can only know what we are not; we can never know what we are, because we are the knowing. See at the moment itself how understanding this affects you; that you can never know it, you cannot represent it, you can only be it. Then there is a natural, unavoidable giving up. It is a transformation of energy. Something happens in your body, in your brain cells, and there comes a moment that you feel that you are nothing, and you feel yourself in this nothing. In this nothing there is fullness.

You have said that the moment of awakening in the morning is very important. Could you tell us why?

Jean Klein: In deep sleep there is no knower. That is a state without knower. In this sense it is closer to our true nature, closer by the state that is no state than the waking state and the dream state that assumes a knower. Consciousness is covered with three phases. Before you go to sleep at night you give up all your qualifications, let everything which is psychology, every residue of thinking, ideas, problems, tension, etc. dissolve. Then only one quality remains, the being without qualities. In other words, come to know what is permanent in you, and what is permanent shines. Letting go of everything which is not permanent, everything that you are not, is just like the moment of surrender when you die. When you die, you have to give up all your qualifications one way or another. Why should you wait until that moment? Why don't you die every evening so that you can see that no death does exist. If you die totally in

the night, you will yourself be present in the morning before the body wakes up. That is a very important moment. Because you will then be convinced that the background of consciousness never becomes influenced by the appearance of the three phases.

Would you please tell us about that which is called satsang.

Jean Klein: Tell me first what you mean by satsang.

Commonly the word means that you are in good company, in the vicinity of someone who is blessed.

Jean Klein: But that depends totally on the point of view that you take. From the standpoint of the thinking, of the I, you are never in good company. You are continuously in: I want, I must, I shall. Out of that you can never have or be good company, because good company begin with yourself. A teacher does not see himself as a teacher. He or she gives without asking anything in return. He considers himself to be nothing, and in that way he sees to it that the nothing in you wakes up when he says: you are nothingness. That is real togetherness. That is perfect company

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